



Unity

Session 12 • Romans 14:5-20



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*). Make copies of **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Jewish and Gentile Believers in Rome*). Hang *Agree* and *Disagree* signs on opposite sides of the room.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 101. Lead the group to respond to the following statements by moving to the *Agree* or *Disagree* signs.

- It is hard to agree to disagree.
- Disagreements have to become disrespectful.
- Opposing viewpoints are OK in the church.

ASK: When have you found yourself needing to disagree with someone in a respectful way? What made it challenging? (p. 101)

CONTEXT: Affirm that disagreements and conflict over those disagreements can affect every area of our lives, including our relationships with other believers. Summarize this content from page 101 to set the context:

- “Believers in Rome found themselves divided over matters such as dietary rules and the observance of special days. Those from Jewish backgrounds often

disagreed with their Gentile brothers and sisters about how to handle these issues. . . . Rather than dwelling on their disagreements, Paul urged them to keep their focus on Jesus. Honoring Him was what mattered most.”

TRANSITION: *Paul knew the church in Rome had both Jews and Gentiles in it and that their diverse backgrounds could lead to conflict and tension. So, in Romans 14, he emphasized unity.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

OVERVIEW: Using **Understand the Context** (p. 101) and **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Romans*), set the background for Romans 14. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Jewish and Gentile Believers in Rome*).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Romans 14:5-8** as the group listens for the sources of conflict among the believers.

GUIDE: Point out that verses 1-4 reveal a rift over food. Explain the conflict over special days in verses 5-8:

- **(14:5-8)** Some believers in Rome, likely Jewish Christians, observed the Sabbath and special days, while others, likely Gentiles, did not. Paul urged each group

to act according to their convictions, remembering that all were responsible to honor the Lord. Whether observing certain days or abstaining from them, eating certain foods or refraining, each choice was to be made in a way that honored God.

ASK: What kind of spiritual practices might believers disagree over today? How can we implement Paul's instruction when we encounter disagreements like these? (p. 103)

SAY: *Paul's focus here was on unity, not conformity. He wasn't saying everyone had to agree. But he did emphasize that Jesus needed to be the center of every discussion and every action as the Roman Christians worked through differences in a way that honored Christ. When we live for Him and die for Him, we maintain respect for others and protect the reputation of Jesus to the world.*

READ: Read aloud Romans 14:9-12 as the group listens for who will be held accountable before God.

ASK: How should these verses shape our understanding of God and His desire for our lives? (p. 103)

LIST: Direct the group to read Romans 14:9-12 again silently and to identify the words that relate to our own accountability before God. Record their responses on the board or a large sheet of paper. Lead a brief discussion on the significance of seeing God as the ultimate Judge for every person—and how our own accountability should affect the way we treat others.

SHARE: Summarize the following to provide additional insight into Paul's teaching:

- **(14:10)** Scripture does not permit believers to judge or despise those who hold different convictions. Both attitudes are incompatible with life in the body of Christ. Paul reminded his readers that each one of us will one day stand before God's judgment seat—a judgment that assesses faithfulness, not salvation. With that future in view, we should choose grace over judgment in our relationships with one another.

ASK: When you disagree with another believer, how does the gospel factor into your response and attitude? (p. 103)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Romans 14:13-18 while the group considers the role believers have in supporting the spiritual growth of others.

ASK: Who has been instrumental in helping you grow spiritually?

DISCUSS: Encourage adults to suggest key words from the verses that relate to helping or hindering others from growing spiritually. Record their responses on the board. Discuss why each of the terms is significant. Highlight words like *stumbling block*, *pitfall*, *hurt*, *love*, *destroy*, and *serves*.

STATE: Explain why it's important for believers to consider the feelings and needs of other believers.

- **(14:13-15)** A stumbling block or pitfall is anything that harms another believer's conscience. Paul reminded believers to

consider those who think differently and to restrain their freedom in love. True love values others above personal rights and patiently waits for spiritual growth.

ASK: What practical things can we do to spur on others and not be a stumbling block? (p. 103) Challenge adults to consider taking one step this week toward building other believers up instead of being a stumbling block or hindrance to them.

READ: Guide the group to read Romans 14:19-20 silently, noting Paul's admonitions in these verses.

DISCUSS: Write *peace* on the board or a large sheet of paper. Lead a brief discussion on what peace means in our culture. Allow a few volunteers to share words or images they associate with peace. Note that peace was Paul's concern for the church in Rome.

ASK: Why is peace so significant in the body of Christ? (p. 103)

LEAD: Note that along with peace, Paul mentioned to pursue what builds up others in the faith. Point out how these two actions work together in the church—and the dangers of ignoring them. The opposite of building up is to tear down. Overlooking our responsibility to edify one another has a damaging effect on God's work.

REFLECT: What might we forfeit if strife or dissension are allowed to grow? (p. 103)

TRANSITION: *Above all else, the Lord wants us to love others, to refrain from being a stumbling block, and to focus on building up peace among our fellow believers.*

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible study passage:

- Believers should allow other believers to express their love for God as God directs them.
- Every person will be held accountable for their actions and choices.
- As members of the body of Christ, we're to spur on each other to spiritual growth.
- Believers are to build up one another, pursuing peace in our relationships with other believers.

IDENTIFY: Encourage adults to read the **Apply the Text** activity on page 103. As they suggest issues today that resemble the disputes in Paul's time, record their responses on the board. Challenge them to come up with practical ways to work through conflict in a godly manner and to adopt at least one idea that they will put into practice to resolve a conflict this week.

PRAY: Close in prayer, asking God to help each person to see ways they build up others and seek peace each day.

AFTER THE SESSION

Follow up this session by sending an email or a text encouraging the group to read and respond to the **Daily Exploration** (pp. 105-107) during the week.